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Cromie



LOOKS AT AUTHORS AND BOOKS

Kitman's Madcap Adventures

By ROBERT CROMIE

MARVIN KITMAN is the fellow who in 1964 ran for President on the Republican platform of 1864, the fellow who bought a ton of steel for delivery to his home, the fellow who tried to obtain a government subsidy for not growing cotton on his lawn in Leonia, N. J., and the fellow who now has written a book, "The Number One Best Seller" (Dial, \$3.95), in which you will find a full account of these and other madcap ventures devised by the off-beat brain of the nation's—and I say it admiringly—Number One Nut.

As all true Kitman fans know, our man is the news-managing editor of Monocle magazine, a member of the Leonia public library, writes in the basement of the "little white house" where he lives with his wife and three children and a dog named Mr. Christian. His family motto is "Publish or Perish." And when he decided to run for President—despite obvious efforts on the part of the opposition to dissuade him—he would have gone for broke except that he was broke already. His fund-raising dinner, if you're among the faithless who have forgotten, was held in the Automat.

"Victor Saul Navasky, the thirty-two-year-old moon-faced publisher of Monocle, was the first to join my staff as campaign manager and appointments secretary. He also



agreed to work as apologies secretary, an innovation in political campaigning. It was the apologies secretary's job to stand up after my speeches and apologies for all the mistakes I had just made. I had a tendency to say the first things that came to mind while speaking in public, and I didn't want to lose the nomination just because I sounded inconsistent.

WELL, UNBELIEVABLE as it still seems, and despite the fact that he suggested that the United Nations sell its building to Conrad Hilton in order to solve its constant financial problems, Kitman was beaten for the nomination by Goldwater, and his outburst of temper on finding himself ignored in the balloting drew from newspaper men a query as to whether this might be due to "lack of sleep, overwork, and nervous fatigue."

"No," said Navasky, "he's just a sore loser."

Among Kitman's other ventures was an attempt to invite both Mao Tse-Tung and Khrushchev to his home in Ilivonia for a summit meeting, a plan frustrated by his inability to arrange a conference-type telephone call with both men. Again, he became enraged at failure, after finding Mao consistently unavailable:

"If my party doesn't come to the phone by tomorrow," I told Operator 248 the next night, 'I am going to send a gunboat on a cruise up the Yangtze river.' I had finally remembered that dealing with the Chinese on equal terms was considered a sign of weakness; they only respected strength. 'And tell the Shanghai operator,' I added, 'that she is as slow as a turtle.'

"To the Chinese, being called a turtle is the worst possible insult."

ALTHO KITMAN did manage to drive the price of Hukuang Railways bonds up by buying three \$1,000 bonds at consecutive prices of \$40, \$45 and \$50, and did indeed get delivery of the steel to his backyard, I am not sure that it would have been a good idea if he had managed to slip into the White House. For example:

On the basis of his writings he is ~~more~~ too fond of the C.I.A. was unable to achieve his wish to become a member of the League of Women Voters, and for some obscure purpose of his own [disguised as a desire to achieve status in his neighborhood] he opened a numbered account in a Swiss bank.

I think a chap like that should operate outside of the Establishment.

But it's a funny, funny book.